



Department of State

TELEGRAM

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 ASAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PH-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 66-15 /061 W
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O 141040Z JAN 80
FM ANCONSUL PESHAWAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 579
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L PESHAWAR 0016

E.O. 12065: GDS 1/14/86 (ARCHARD, D.B.) OR-M
TAGS: PINS, PEPR, AF, UR
SUBJECT: SECURITY AT SALANG TUNNEL, RUSSIAN TROOPS

1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SECURITY OF SLANG TUNNEL THROUGH ASYANISTAN'S HINDU KUSH RANGE IS IN HANDS OF RUSSIAN TROOPS, ACCORDING TO RECENT TRAVELLERS. THE TUNNEL, HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY THE STRATEGICALLY MOST IMPORTANT BIT OF ROAD IN THE COUNTRY, APPEARS NOT TO BE HEAVILY GUARDED, THEY SAY.

3. TRAVELLERS WERE TWO BRITISH JOURNALISTS (THE EXPRESS AND THE TELEGRAPH) WHO SET OUT FROM KABUL BY TAXI JAN. 6, RELATED ACCOUNT TO ME JAN. 12. PAIR WERE ABLE TO DRIVE THROUGH TUNNEL AND RETURN, BEFORE BEING STOPPED BY RUSSIANS AFTER LEAVING SOUTHERN END. SUBSEQUENTLY, THEY WERE DETAINED BRIEFLY BUT TREATED WELL (INCLUDING A MEAL OF BORSCHT).

4. BRITS REPORT THAT THEY WERE SOMEWHAT SURPRIZED BY "LIGHT" SECURITY AT TUNNEL. NOT MANY RUSSIAN TROOPS WERE, IN EVIDENCE, ONLY ONE ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER AND, AT MOST, A FEW MACHINE GUNS.
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THE TERRAIN IN THE AREA IS VERY STEEP, THUS IT SEEMS UNLIKELY

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THAT MORE TROOPS WOULD BE POSED IN THE AREA BUT OUT OF SIGHT, JOURNALISTS SAID.

5. IN ALL, BRITS SAW ABOUT 100 RUSSIAN SOLDIERS WHILE OUTSIDE KABUL. THOSE AT TUNNEL SAID THEY WERE PARATROOPERS (THEY WORE WINGED INSIGNIA) WHO HAD "DROPPED IN." ALL BUT A FEW SOLDIERS WERE EUROPEAN RUSSIANS, INCLUDING "ALL" OFFICERS.

6. COMMENT: PRESS HAS BEEN REPORTING THAT MAJORITY OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN ARE CENTRAL ASIAN ETHNICS, PICKED SO THEY WILL "BLEND IN" TO AREA. THIS THEME HAS BEEN PLAYED FOR WELL OVER A YEAR NOW, BUT I HAVE HEARD LITTLE TO SUBSTANTIATE IT. TO THE CONTRARY, BEFORE THE CHRISTMAS INVASION, MY SOURCES AMONG INSURGENTS CONSISTENTLY REPORTED THAT RUSSIAN ADVISORS WERE EUROPEANS, WITH A FEW TAJIK INTERPRETERS. SITUATION MAY NOW HAVE CHANGED, BUT SLANG TUNNEL OBSERVATION SUGGESTS THAT ETHNIC MIX REMAINS SAME.
ARCHARD.

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